AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED)   An   image   processing   method, comprising the steps of:

receiving specification of a first area having a desired color-tone in a displayed image;

receiving specification of a second area in the image or in another image; and

changing a color-tone of a desired area including the second area into the color-tone of the first area while ~~continuously~~ gradually changing the color tone at a border of the second area.

2.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED)   An   image   processing   apparatus, comprising:

display means for image display;

area specification means for specifying a first area having a desired color-tone in an image displayed on the display means and a second area in the image or in another image; and

conversion means for converting a color-tone of a desired area including the second area into the color-tone of the first area while ~~continuously~~ gradually changing the color tone at a border of the second area.

3.   (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable recording medium storing a program to cause a computer to execute the procedures of:

receiving specification of a first area having a desired color-tone in a displayed image;

receiving specification of a second area in the image or in another image; and

changing a color-tone of a desired area including the second area into the color-tone of the first area while ~~continuously~~ gradually changing the color tone at a border of the second area.

4-6.   (CANCELED)

7.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing method of claim 1, wherein the step of changing the color-tone of the desired area including the second area includes:

obtaining cumulative histograms of the first area and the second area; and

correlating the cumulative histogram of the first area and the cumulative histogram of the second area.

8.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing method of claim 1, wherein the step of changing the color-tone of the desired area including the second area includes changing the color-tone of a skin color area included in the second area to the color-tone of a skin color included in the first area.

9.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing method of claim 1, wherein the first area includes a plurality of facial areas.

10.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing method of claim 1, wherein the desired area that includes the second area is one of an entirety of the second area, a specific area within the second area, an entirety of an image that includes the second area, and an area comprising the second area and other areas.

11.   (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing apparatus of claim 2, wherein the conversion means are configured to:

obtain cumulative histograms of the first area and the second area; and

correlate the cumulative histogram of the first area and the cumulative histogram of the second area.

12. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing apparatus of claim 2, wherein the conversion means are configured to change the color-tone of a skin color area included in the second area to the color-tone of a skin color included in the first area.

13. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing apparatus of claim 2, wherein the first area includes a plurality of facial areas.

14. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The image processing apparatus of claim 2, wherein the desired area that includes the second area is one of an entirety of the second area, a specific area within the second area, an entirety of an image that includes the second area, and an area comprising the second area and other areas.

15. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable recording medium of claim 3, wherein the procedure of changing the color-tone of the desired area including the second area includes:

obtaining cumulative histograms of the first area and the second area; and

correlating the cumulative histogram of the first area and the cumulative histogram of the second area.

16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable recording medium of claim 3, wherein the procedure of changing the color-tone of the desired area including the second area includes changing the color-tone of a skin color area included in the second area to the color-tone of a skin color included in the first area.

17. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable recording medium of claim 3, wherein the first area includes a plurality of facial areas.

18. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The computer-readable recording medium of claim 3, wherein the desired area that includes the second area is one of an entirety of the second area, a specific area within the second area, an entirety of an image that includes the second area, and an area comprising the second area and other areas.

19. (NEW) The image processing method of claim 1, wherein gradually changing the color tone at the border of the second area includes is such that a transition of the color tone of the second area from the border of the second area to the desired color tone is gradual.

20. (NEW) The image processing apparatus of claim 2, wherein the conversion means gradually changes the color tone at the border of the second area such that a transition of the color tone of the second area from the border of the second area to the desired color tone is gradual.

21. (NEW) The computer-readable recording medium of claim 3, wherein the procedure of gradually changing the color tone at the border of the second area includes is such that a transition of the color tone of the second area from the border of the second area to the desired color tone is gradual.

22. (NEW) The image processing method of claim 1, further comprising:

extracting a first skin-color area within the first area, after receiving the specification of the first area; and

setting the desired color-tone as a color tone of the first skin-color area of the first area,

wherein the first skin-color area is an area within the first area with a color-tone that is within a predefined skin-color range.

23.   (NEW) The image processing apparatus of claim 2,

wherein the area specification means extract a first skin-color area within the first area, after specifying the first area, and set the desired color-tone as a color tone of the first skin-color area of the first area, and

wherein the first skin-color area is an area within the first area with a color-tone that is within a predefined skin-color range.